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PRESS RELEASE

PROTEST TO MRS THATCHER OVER ARMS DELIVERIES TO INDONESIA

TAPOL has today called on the British Government to stop supplying arms to the Indonesian military regime which is engaged in aggressive wars in its colonial territories of East Timor and West Papua and is intensifying repression against its domestic critics.

The call was made as Mrs Thatcher sets out on a tour of South East Asia which will include a two-day visit to Indonesia.

TAPOL has today also published a Special Supplement on repression and resistance in East Timor, the former Portuguese colony which is now illegally occupied by the Indonesian Armed Forces. The 12-page Supplement, a copy of which has been sent to Mrs Thatcher and to members of her mission, consists primarily of a detailed report recently smuggled out of East Timor. It documents the wave of persecution, arbitrary arrest and detention, persistent torture, disappearances and extrajudicial killings which has terrorised the population since Indonesian troops launched a new offensive against the Fretilin armed resistance in August 1983.

It gives a detailed account of the massacre of several hundred people in the strategic village of Kraras which was perpetrated by Indonesian soldiers at the start of the offensive. Confirmation that the massacre had taken place came in an interview with foreign journalists in March 1985 by Mgr Filipe Ximenes Belo, head of the Catholic church of East Timor who declared that he knew of the existence of two mass graves where 84 victims of this massacre are buried.

Besides details about the persecution of several hundred victims of Indonesian atrocities in strategic villages throughout the three eastern regions of East Timor, the Supplement also reports on the widespread lack of food caused primarily by security restrictions on freedom of movement in the strategic villages which has severely crippled the ability of Timorese peasants to cultivate food crops.

Although the British Government does not officially condone Indonesia's annexation of East Timor and has often declared its support for the right of the people to determine their own future, free from outside pressures, it nevertheless stepped up its delivery of weapons, Hawk ground-attack aircraft and other military equipment following the commencement of Indonesia's war against East Timor in December 1975. Mrs Thatcher's forthcoming visit comes hard on the heels of a series of arms deals which has made Britain Indonesia's major source of war equipment in Western Europe. During 1984, deals were concluded to supply three refitted naval frigates to the Indonesian Navy, to add another five Hawks to the two squadrons already delivered, and to start delivery of £100 million worth of Rapier missiles manufactured by British Aerospace. The Rapier contract was the largest British arms deal in 1984.

TAPOL has also asked Mrs Thatcher to press the Indonesian Government to allow the International Red Cross (ICRC) to resume relief operations on mainland East Timor which were suspended in July 1983, just prior to the offensive, because the ICRC was denied facilities to assess relief needs. The armed conflict in East Timor is one of only two conflicts worldwide where the ICRC is prevented from operating, the other being the conflict in Afghanistan.

In its letter to Mrs Thatcher sent today, TAPOL has also drawn her attention to widespread Indonesian military operations in West Papua against the Free Papua Movement. In the past year, over 12,000 Papuans have fled their homes and crossed the border into Papua New Guinea. In Jakarta last September, soldiers open fire on a crowd of demonstrators killing more than sixty. Many of the severely injured survivors of this massacre are now on trial while none of those responsible have been punished.

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